

## The Sounder of the Shofar

A person who sounds the shofar is known as a *Ba'al t'kiyah* (בעל תקיעה): “Master of the ‘horn blast’”

There are various other settings for the word “ba'al” (בעל):

- \* Ba'al (בעל): husband, master (also, Ba'al, the Canaanite god)
- \* Ba'al k'riyah (בעל קריאה) [or Ba'al koreh (בעל קורא)]: “Master of the reading”
- \* Ba'al t'filah (בעל תפילה): “Master of prayer”
- \* Ba'al habayit (בעל הבית): “Master of the house”
- \* Ba'al t'shuvah (בעל תשובה): “Master of repentance”

## The Shofar Sounds

(From [http://www.aish.com/h/hh/rh/shofar/Shofar\\_Symbolism.html](http://www.aish.com/h/hh/rh/shofar/Shofar_Symbolism.html))

### The Tekiah (תקיעה) Sound

Rosh Hashana is the day of appreciating who God is. We then internalize that understanding so that it becomes a living, practical part of our everyday reality. God is all-powerful. God is the Creator. God is the Sustainer. God is the Supervisor. In short, God is King of the Universe.

But for many of us, the idea of a "king" conjures up images of a greedy and power-hungry despot who wants to subjugate the masses for his selfish aims.

In Jewish tradition, a king is first and foremost a servant of the people. His only concern is that the people live in happiness and harmony. His decrees and laws are only for the good of the people, not for himself. (see Maimonides, Laws of Kings 2:6)

The object of Rosh Hashana is to crown God as our King. *Tekiah* — the long, straight shofar blast — is the sound of the King's coronation. In the Garden of Eden, Adam's first act was to proclaim God as King. And now, the shofar proclaims to ourselves and to the world: God is our King. We set our values straight and return to the reality of God as the One Who runs the world... guiding history, moving mountains, and caring for each and every human being individually and personally.

Maimonides adds one important qualification: It isn't enough that God is MY King alone. If ALL humanity doesn't recognize God as King, then there is something lacking in my own relationship with God. Part of my love for the Almighty is to help guide all people to an appreciation of Him. Of course this is largely an expression of my deep caring for others. But it also affects my own sense of God's all-encompassing Kingship.

## **The Shevarim (שבירים) Sound**

When we think about the year gone by, we know deep down that we've failed to live up to our full potential. In the coming year, we yearn not to waste that opportunity ever again. The Kabbalists say that Shevarim — three medium, wailing blasts — is the sobbing cry of a Jewish heart — yearning to connect, to grow, to achieve.

Every person has the ability to change and be great. This can be accomplished much faster than you ever dreamed of. The key is to pray from the bottom of your heart and ask God for the ability to become great. Don't let yourself be constrained by the past. You know you have enormous potential.

At the moment the shofar is blown, we cry out to God from the depths of our soul. This is the moment — when our souls stand before the Almighty without any barriers — that we can truly let go.

## **The Teruah (תרועה) Sound**

On Rosh Hashana, we need to wake up and be honest and objective about our lives: Who we are, where we've been, and which direction we're headed. The *Teruah* sound — 9 quick blasts in short succession — resembles an alarm clock, arousing us from our spiritual slumber. The shofar brings clarity, alertness, and focus.

The Talmud says: "When there's judgment from below, there's no need for judgment from above." What this means is that if we take the time to construct a sincere, realistic model of how we've fallen short in the past, and what we expect to change in the future, then God doesn't need to "wake us up" to what we already know.

God wants us to make an honest effort to maximize the gifts He gave us. You aren't expected to be anything you're not. But you can't hoodwink God, either.

The reason we lose touch and make mistakes is because we don't take the time everyday to reconnect with our deepest desires and essence. The solution is to spend time alone everyday, asking: Am I on track? Am I focused? Am I pursuing goals which will make the greatest overall difference in my life and in the world?

Make it a habit to keep in touch with yourself, and when Rosh Hashana comes around, the alarm clock of the shofar won't be nearly as jarring!